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September 23, 2025

Remarks by John A. Squires

Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and

Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office

Monday, September 22, 2025, 10 a.m. ET

USPTO Headquarters, Alexandria, Virginia

Good morning everyone,

It is a true honor to stand before you today as the incoming head of the United States Patent and Trademark Office — here, on this remarkable day, on our beautiful campus.

As I am sworn in as the 60th Director of the USPTO, I am filled with both gratitude and excitement. Gratitude for the opportunity to serve alongside more than 14,000 talented colleagues. And excitement for what lies ahead as we carry forward a mission written directly into our nation's Constitution: to promote and protect invention, creativity, and ingenuity.

First, I can only rightfully begin with a heartfelt thank you — to all of you. As I said in my Senate Judiciary remarks, we are world-class, none better — the beating heart of America's Innovation Agency. I thank each and every one of you — examiners, administrative staff, support personnel, security, IT, leadership — anyone and everyone that comprises our team — for the work you do, day in and day out. You are the foundation upon which the strength of our intellectual property system rests. Our agency's success is not the result of any one individual, but of the collective efforts of a dedicated team working toward our common Constitutional goal.

And a very special thank you to Acting Director Coke Morgan Stewart, who has been nothing short of exceptional, working tirelessly to first stabilize operations, and relentlessly in her pursuit to turn the tide against increasing pendency and backlog issues that threatened to overwhelm the agency. I don't know how she did it — but she did — and we are now back on our front foot going forward because of her remarkable stewardship. Thank you, Coke.

I would also like to acknowledge Judge Ryan T. Holte and his staff who are here with us today. It was an honor to have me be ceremonially sworn-in by both a former patent law professor and patent holder.

Also, I would like to thank Secretary Howard W. Lutnick — himself an extraordinary inventor with more than 400 patents. At the National Inventors Hall of Fame Dinner, he delighted both the audience and the medal recipients when he said, “in [me], you have a friend, you have an admirer, you have a supporter.” I am deeply grateful for his confidence in me, and for his faith in this Office to lead the way forward — championing the entrepreneurial spirit of all Americans into the future, and especially those with whom he shares that rare but indispensable spark of inspirational genius. Thank you, sir.

I am also grateful to President Donald J. Trump — to whom I was introduced by an inventor — for his trust and confidence in me. In his World Intellectual Property Day proclamation earlier this year, the President committed to strong action to “protect the promise of American innovation.” I will do everything in my power to make sure promises made are promises kept.

And finally, of course, my precious family, my wife Mary Lou, son Will, daughter Elizabeth — who were with me not only at my hearing but also every step of the way. And my sisters Kathleen and Christine — whom if you follow my social media posts you know I'm very, very proud of. And thank them all for being here today, traveling from near and far — and early — to be with me. All my love.

So, let me be clear in my view — which should come as no surprise to anyone: I firmly and without reservation believe in a strong, robust, expansive, and resilient intellectual property system — and everything that goes with it. Patents and trademarks form the backbone of our competitive American economy. Our patent system has helped catalyze inventions that fuel industries and improve the quality of life, while our trademark system empowers businesses to build trust, protect their brands, and distinguish themselves in a crowded marketplace. The protections we offer enable entrepreneurs to compete, investors to believe, and consumers to have confidence in the products and services they rely on every day.

Our Office is not just an administrative agency; we are a strategic arm of national economic policy; we are the Department of Commerce's Central Bank of Innovation. Every piece of IP we put into circulation is a potential job, a new business, a competitive advantage, or an investible asset. And yet another win for both society and the Constitutional foresight of our Founders.

Here, we drive prosperity and progress. In today's interconnected world, the ripple effects of what we do extend far beyond our borders. Our decisions influence international standards, impact global supply chains, and help foster innovation and commercial ecosystems that contribute to economic growth worldwide. That's why Commerce is our mothership — and that's why we are an agency like no other.

The credibility and consistency of our work give individuals, businesses, and institutions the confidence to invest, to dream big, and to bring transformative ideas and powerful brands to market. What we do here matters — not just to applicants, but to the world.

As I testified to in my opening Statement to Senate Judiciary, there's a saying that every patent begins its life as a trade secret. Inventors face a choice: keep their ideas locked away or bring them here — to our patent factory. And when they choose us, they place their trust in our ability to help them transform bold ideas into strong, enforceable rights. That's our mission.

We take in raw innovation — and with diligence and care — help shape, hone, and hew it into durable and definable intellectual property. And when mistakes happen — and they will — there's no need to be afraid of them. We will use the corrective measures Congress has provided — measurably, fairly, and judiciously — to improve our processes along the way — both front-end and back-end.

Inventors — as well as brand owners — don't just seek rights; they make a trade with the public — disclosing their ideas and identities in exchange for time-limited protection. We are the guardians of that social contract.

As to patents, armed with full disclosure and a clear understanding of the prior art and its applicability — our charge in examination is to identify the line where the prior art ends and the applicant's inventive contribution begins. And as to that line, we are not judges in an adversarial system. We are seasoned negotiators — on behalf of the American people — working with inventors or brand owners seeking their new and the next to discern the contours, shape, and definition of their claims to ownership — fairly, faithfully, and well documented. Our role is not to dispassionately say “no,” but to engage and help find the “yes” that is properly bounded by law.

Let me propose an analogy. As you may know, I come from spending considerable time on Wall Street — and there, in a market exchange, the difference between bid/ask is called “price discovery.” For patents, we can begin to think of that space between the prior art and the inventive concept as effectively “claims discovery.” What do I mean by that? The line — the line where the prior art leaves off and where the inventive contribution begins. That's a bona fide value proposition — disclosure for exclusivity, incarnate.

And I want to empower every examiner with the tools, training, and support needed to carry out that role with precision, pride, and excitement. And exciting it is — think about it — you're seeing it first. You should have the best tools for every case of first impression because that's when they're needed most, that's when they matter most.

And as to our trademark team — with NIL, social media, 24/7/365 exposure — 15 minutes of fame seems so anachronistic. It's hand-to-hand combat in the market right now for just 15 seconds.

But talk about the place to be! Nothing hotter — trademarks are social media's superpower — protecting origin, reputation, and goodwill. Our trademark examiners ensure that the brands consumers rely on are distinguishable, that confusion is minimized, and that the integrity of commerce is preserved. When a consumer reaches for a product, it is often the trademark they trust — and it is your work that safeguards that trust.

All this is to say that — at the very heart of our system is our examining corps — both patent and trademark. You are the stewards of quality, the gatekeepers of innovation-and-commercial-identity, and the best in the world at what you do — just as I've told everybody. Under oath.

What you do day-to-day is not easy, and it's not always visible-to-or-appreciated-by the broader public. But your work enables inventors and entrepreneurs to take risks, investors to have confidence, and

industries to grow. You are the quiet but reliable engine of American progress.

As we look ahead, I couldn't be more excited about what we WILL accomplish together. There is always room for improvement — in our processes, our tools, our communication, and our support systems. That's in every business and a fact of life. But let's WELCOME it and explore new ways to streamline operations, enhance the quality of our work, and make the best use of data and technology to support decision-making. Just as we protect innovation, we must also model it. Let's not be afraid to innovate internally — to pilot new tools, rethink workflows, and empower our people to lead the change. Tell. Me. What. You. Think. That spirit of continuous improvement is not a critique — it is a call to excellence, to ensuring our system meets the demands of the future.

We will also ensure that our system is accessible — whether you're a solo entrepreneur or a Fortune 500 company or an applicant coming in through an international treaty — the doors of the USPTO must be equally open. We will ensure they are — and so too that those doors are wide enough to accept whatever the on-rush new technology provides, wherever the puck is going.

Make no mistake: the strength of our patent and trademark systems is tied directly to the strength of our economy. Virtually one and the same. Intellectual property fuels entrepreneurship. It attracts capital. It creates jobs. It empowers small businesses to compete and enables large enterprises to grow. It is the connective tissue between the idea in a garage and the product on the global market, between a new business and a trusted brand. When we protect ideas and identities well, we build industries. When we do it consistently, we build confidence. And when we do it together, we build a future that is bold, resilient, and fueled by the boundless ingenuity and steely resolve of the American people.

Thank you again for the warm welcome. I am humbled by the opportunity to lead this great agency — one like no other in our government — and to support and encourage the vital work you do. Intellectual property protected here is the best of us, it extols our wares and foretells of future of American ingenuity unleashed for all the world to see.

I look forward to getting to know you in the process, learn from your insights, and serve with distinction, together, as we fashion not only our path forward — but THE path forward. There is much to do — and I am confident that, together, we will not only rise to the challenge but also set the bar.

Let's go to work — and let's have some fun doing it. Thank you.

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